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Dan B**CITY OF SKAGWAY**

GATEWAY TO THE GOLD RUSH OF "98"  
P.O. BOX 415, SKAGWAY, ALASKA 99840  
(PHONE) (907) 983-2297  
(FAX) (907) 983-2151

RECEIVED

AK Dept. of Education & Early Development  
Commissioner

November 20, 2003

The Honorable Darroll Hargraves  
Chair  
Local Boundary Commission  
550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1770  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

The Honorable Roger Sampson  
Commissioner  
Dept. of Education  
801 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1894

Dear Commissioners Hargraves and Sampson:

The City of Skagway has received your letter of November 10<sup>th</sup> requesting our input on the issue of consolidation of schools. We are very concerned about the direction that you have been given, both from the legislature as well as from LBC staff.

While we are certainly sympathetic to the desire to increase efficiencies as the state addresses the growing fiscal gap, we remain amazed that there is still the misplaced sense of a "one size fits all" solution to the problem.

Some of our largest districts in our most populated communities enjoy state support of local education of upwards of 80% of the cost of that education, while some small districts with enrollments of under 250 students have a level of state support well under 50% of the total cost of education.

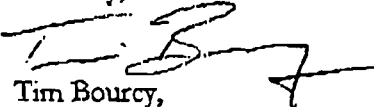
It is not necessarily the case that small remote school districts enjoy the highest level of state support. Nor is it necessarily the case that consolidation of small districts will save money in the long term. And it is rarely the case that by saving money in administrative costs the quality of the educational experience of those students will improve.

This is particularly the case in Skagway. We have been the focus of the ire of Senator Wilken for quite some time. I am sure that both he and the LBC would like for our school district to be combined with Haines, at a minimum. As our superintendent is also the school principal, the cost savings would be minimal. However, the advantages to Haines would be significant in that they would have access to our substantial tax base, and would have the majority of the seats on the resulting school board. More money - No opposition... This would be a godsend to them, and the death knell for us. And, we already contribute in excess of 50% of the cost of our education, which is considerably higher than Anchorage or Haines.

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If there are opportunities to increase the educational opportunities in areas in the state while at the same time saving money, then they should be explored. However, do not assume that what works in one area will work in all. Perhaps you should start by looking at any school district that receives more than 50% of its funding from the state, regardless of enrollment, and see how the local governments can step up to the plate. Please don't mess with those districts who are already paying the lion's share of their local education costs. This will only make their burden greater, and the education of their youth less certain.

Sincerely,



Tim Bourcy,  
Mayor

Cc: Governor Murkowski  
Commissioner Blatchford  
Senator Lincoln  
Representative Kookesh